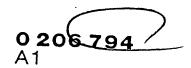
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- Supported polymerization catalyst.
- An olefin polymerization supported catalyst comprising a support and the reaction product of a metallocene of Group 4b. 5b or 6b of the Periodic Table and an alumoxane, said reaction product formed in the presence of a support.

G. METALOCENOS

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SUPPORTED POLYMERIZATION CATALYST

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This invention relates to a new, improved catalyst useful 1 for the polymerization and copolymerization of olefins and particu-2 larly useful for the polymerization of ethylene and copolymerization 3 of ethylene with 1-olefins having 3 or more carbon atoms such as, for 4 example, propylene, i-butene, l-butene, l-pentene, l-hexene, and 5 1-octene; dienes such as butadiene, 1,7-octadiene, and 1,4-hexadiene 6 or cyclic olefins such as norbornene. The invention particularly 7 relates to a new and improved heterogeneous transition metal contain-8 ing supported catalyst which can be employed without the use of an 9 organometallic cocatalyst in the polymerization of olefins. The 10 invention further generally relates to a process for polymerization 11 of ethylene alone or with other 1-olefins or diolefins in the 12 presence of the new supported transition metal containing catalyst 13 comprising the reaction product of a metallocene and an alumoxane in 14 the presence of an support material such as silica. 15 16 Description of the Prior Art 17 Traditionally, ethylene and 1-olefins have been polymerized or copolymerized in the presence of hydrocarbon insoluble catalyst 18 19 systems comprising a transition metal compound and an aluminum alkyl. More recently, active homogeneous catalyst systems comprising-20 a bis(cyclopentadienyl)titanium dialkyl or a bis(cyclopentadienyl)-21 zirconium dialkyl, an aluminum trialkyl and water have been found to 22 23 be useful for the polymerization of ethylene. Such catalyst systems are generally referred to as "Zieoler-type catalysts". 24 DE-A-2608863 discloses the use of a 25 catalyst system for the polymerization of ethylene consisting of bis -26 (cyclopentadienyl) titanium dialkyl, aluminum trialkyl and water. 27 28 DE-A-2608933 discloses an ethylene polymerization catalyst system consisting of zirconium metallocenes 29 30 of the general formula (cyclopentadienyl), ZrY4-n, wherein n stands for a number in the range of 1 to 4, Y for R, CH2AlR2, 31 CH₂CH₂AlR₂ and CH₂CH(AlR₂)₂, wherein R stands for alkyl or metallo 32 alkyl, and an aluminum trialkyl cocatalyst and water. 33 EP-A-0035242 34 discloses a process for preparing ethylene and atactic propylene polymers in the presence 35 of a halogen-free Ziegler catalyst system of (1) cyclopentadienyl

compound of the formula (cyclopentadienyl) $_{n}$ MeY $_{4-n}$ in which n is an integer from 1 to 4, Me is a transition metal, especially zirconium, and Y is either hydrogen, a C_1 - C_5 alkyl or metallo alkyl group or a radical having the following general formula CH_2AIR_2 , $CH_2CH_2AIR_2$ and $CH_2CH(AIR_2)_2$ in which R represents a C_1 - C_5 alkyl or metallo alkyl group, and (2) an alumoxane.

Additional teachings of homogeneous catalyst systems comprising a metallocene and alumoxane are EP-A-0069951, US 4404344 and EP-A-128045.

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An advantage of the metallocene alumoxane homogeneous catalyst system is the very high activity obtained for ethylene polymerization. Another significant advantage is, unlike olefin polymers produced in the presence of conventional heterogeneous Ziegler catalysts, terminal unsaturation is present in polymers produced in the presence of these homogeneous catalysts. Nevertheless, the catalysts suffer from a disadvantage, that is, the ratio of alumoxane to metallocene is high, for example in the order of 1,000 to 1 or greater. Such voluminous amounts of alumoxane would require extensive treatment of polymer product obtained in order to remove the undesirable aluminum. A second disadvantage, of the homogeneous catalyst system which is also associated with traditional heterogeneous Ziegler catalysts, is the multiple of delivery systems required for introducing the individual catalyst components into the polymerization reactor.

It would be highly desirable to provide a metallocene based catalyst which is commercially useful for the polymerization of ole-fins wherein the aluminum to transition metal ratio is within respectable ranges and further to provide a polymerization catalyst which does not require the presence of a cocatalyst thereby reducing the number of delivery systems for introducing catalyst into polymerization reactor.

Summary of the Invention

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 In accordance with the present invention, a new metallocene/ alumoxane catalyst is provided for olefin polymerization which catalyst can be usefully employed for the production of low, medium and high density polyethylenes and copolymers of ethylene with alphaolefins having 3 to 18 or more carbon atoms and/or diolefins having up to 18 carbon atoms or more.

The new catalyst provided in accordance with one embodiment of this invention, comprises the reaction product of at least one metallocene and an alumoxane in the presence of an support material thereby providing a supported metallocene-alumoxane reaction product as the sole catalyst component.

The supported reaction product will polymerize olefins at commercially respectable rates without the presence of the objectionable excess of alumoxane as required in the homogenous system.

In yet another embodiment of this invention there is provided a process for the polymerization of ethylene and other olefins, and particularly homopolymers of ethylene and copolymers of ethylene and higher alpha-olefins and/or diolefins and/or cyclic olefins such as norbornene in the presence of the new catalysts.

The metallocenes employed in the production of the reaction product on the support are organometallic coordination compounds which are cyclopentadienyl derivatives of a Group 4b, 5b, or 6b metal of the Periodic Table (56th Edition of Handbook of Chemistry and Physics, CRC Press [1975]) and include mono, di and tricyclopentadienyls and their derivatives of the transition metals. Particularly desirable are the metallocene of a Group 4b and 5b metal such as titanium, zirconium, hafnium and vanadium. The alumoxanes employed in forming the reaction product with the metallocenes are themselves the reaction products of an aluminum trialkyl with water.

The alumoxanes are well known in the art and preferably comprise oligomeric linear and/or cyclic alkyl alumoxanes represented by the formula:

1 (I) $R-(Al-0)_n-AlR_2$ for oligomeric, linear alumoxanes and R

3 (II) (-Al-O-)_m for oligomeric, cyclic alumoxane,
4 R

wherein n is 1-40, preferably 10-20, m is 3-40, preferably 3-20 and R is a C_1 - C_8 alkyl group and preferably methyl. Generally, in the preparation of alumoxanes from, for example, aluminum trimethyl and water, a mixture of linear and cyclic compounds is obtained.

The alumoxanes can be prepared in a variety of ways. Preferably, they are prepared by contacting water with a solution of aluminum trialkyl, such as, for example, aluminum trimethyl, in a suitable organic solvent such as benzene or an aliphatic hydrocarbon. For example, the aluminum alkyl is treated with water in the form of a moist solvent. In a preferred method, the aluminum alkyl, such as aluminum trimethyl, can be desirably contacted with a hydrated salt such as hydrated ferrous sulfate. The method comprises treating a dilute solution of aluminum trimethyl in, for example, toluene with ferrous sulfate heptahydrate.

PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

Briefly, the transition metal containing catalyst of the present invention is obtained by reacting an alumoxane and a metallocene in the presence of a solid support material. The supported reaction product can be employed as the sole catalyst component for the polymerization of olefins or, in the alternative, it can be employed with a organometallic cocatalyst.

Typically, the support can be any of the solid, particularly, porous supports such as talc, inorganic oxides, and resinous support materials such as polyolefin. Preferably, the support material is an inorganic oxide in finely divided form.

Suitable inorganic oxide materials which are desirably employed in accordance with this invention include Group 2a, 3a, 4a c: 4b metal oxides such as silica, alumina, and silica-alumina and mixtures thereof. Other inorganic oxides that may be employed either alone or in combination with the silica, alumina or silica-alumina are

magnesia, titania, zirconia, and the like. Other suitable support materials, however, can be employed, for example, finely divided polyolefins such as finely divided polyethylene.

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The metal oxides generally contain acidic surface hydroxyl groups which will react with the alumoxane or transition metal compound first added to the reaction solvent. Prior to use, the inorganic oxide support may be dehydrated, ie subjected to a thermal treatment in order to remove water and reduce the concentration of the surface hydroxyl groups. The treatment may be carried out in vacuum or while purging with a dry inert gas such as nitrogen at a temperature 10 of about 100°C to about 1000°C, and preferably, from about 300°C to about 800°C. Pressure considerations are not critical. The duration 12 of the thermal treatment can be from about 1 to about 24 hours. 13 However, shorter or longer times can be employed provided equilibrium 14 is established with the surface hydroxyl groups. 15

Chemical dehydration as an alternative method of dehydration 16 of the metal oxide support material can advantageously be employed. 17 Chemical dehydration converts all water and hydroxyl groups on the 18 oxide surface to inert species. Useful chemical agents are for 19 example, SiCl₄; chlorosilanes, such as trimethylchlorosilane, 20 dimethyaminotrimethylsilane and the like. The chemical dehydration is 21 accomplished by slurrying the inorganic particulate material, such as, 22 for example, silica in an inert low boiling hydrocarbon, such as, for-23 --example, hexane. During the chemical dehydration reaction, the silica 24 should be maintained in a moisture and oxygen-free atmosphere. To the 25 silica slurry is then added a low boiling inert hydrocarbon solution 26 of the chemical dehydrating agent, such as, for example, dichlorodi-27 methylsilane. The solution is added slowly to the slurry. The 28 temperature ranges during chemical dehydration reaction can be from 29 about 25°C to about 120°C, however, higher and lower temperatures can 30 be employed. Preferably, the temperature will be about 50°C to about 31 70°C. The chemical dehydration procedure should be allowed to proceed 32 until all the moisture is removed from the particulate support 33 material, as indicated by cessation of gas evolution. Normally, the 34 chemical dehydration reaction will be allowed to proceed from about 30 35 minutes to about 16 hours, preferably 1 to 5 hours. Upon completion 36 of the chemical dehydration, the solid particulate material is 37 filtered under a nitrogen atmosphere and washed one or more times 38

with a dry, oxygen-free inert hydrocarbon solvent. The wash solvents, as well as the diluents employed to form the slurry and the solution of chemical dehydrating agent, can be any suitable inert hydrocarbon. Illustrative of such hydrocarbons are heptane, hexane, toluene, isopentane and the like.

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The normally hydrocarbon soluble metallocenes and alumoxanes are converted to a heterogeneous supported catalyst by depositing said metallocenes and alumoxanes on the dehydrated support material. The order of addition of the metallocene and alumoxane to the support material can vary. For example, the metallocene (neat or dissolved in a suitable hydrocarbon solvent) can be first added to the support material followed by the addition of the alumoxane; the alumoxane and metallocene can be added to the support material simultaneously; the alumoxane can be first added to the support material followed by the addition of the metallocene. In accordance with the preferred embodiment of this invention the alumoxane dissolved in a suitable inert hydrocarbon solvent is added to the support material slurried in the same or other suitable hydrocarbon liquid and thereafter the metallocene is added to the slurry.

The treatment of the support material, as mentioned above, is conducted in an inert solvent. The same inert solvent or a different inert solvent is also employed to dissolve the metallocenes and alumoxanes. Preferred solvents include mineral oils and the various hydrocarbons which are liquid at reaction temperatures and in which the individual ingredients are soluble. Illustrative examples of useful solvents include the alkanes such as pentane, iso-pentane, hexane, heptane, octane and nonane; cycloalkanes such as cyclopentane and cyclohexane; and aromatics such as benzene, toluene, ethylbenzene and diethylbenzene. Preferably the support material is slurried in toluene and the metallocene and alumoxane are dissolved in toluene prior to addition to the support material. The amount of solvent to be employed is not critical. Nevertheless, the amount should be employed so as to provide adequate heat transfer away from the catalyst components during reaction and to permit good mixing.

The supported catalyst of this invention is prepared by simply adding the reactants in the suitable solvent and preferably toluene to the support material slurry, preferably silica slurried in toluene. The ingredients can be added to the reaction vessel rapidly

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or slowly. The temperature maintained during the contact of the 1 reactants can vary widely, such as, for example, from 0° to 100°C. 2 Greater or lesser temperatures can also be employed. Preferably, the 3 alumoxanes and metallocenes are added to the silica at room tempera-4 ture. The reaction between the alumoxane and the support material is 5 rapid, however, it is desirable that the alumoxane be contacted with 6 the support material for about one hour up to eighteen hours or 7 greater. Preferably, the reaction is maintained for about one hour. 8 The reaction of the alumoxane, the metallocene and the support 9 material is evidenced by its exothermic nature and a color change. 10 At all times, the individual ingredients as well as the 11 recovered catalyst component are protected from oxygen and moisture. 12 Therefore, the reactions must be performed in an oxygen and moisture 13 free atmosphere and recovered in an oxygen and moisture free atmos-14 phere. Preferably, therefore, the reactions are performed in the 15 16 presence of an inert dry gas such as, for example, nitrogen. recovered solid catalyst is maintained in a nitrogen atmosphere. 17 Upon completion of the reaction of the metallocene and alum-18 19 oxane with the support, the solid material can be recovered by any 20 well-known technique. For example, the solid material can be recovered from the liquid by vacuum evaporation or decantation. The solid 21-22 is thereafter dried under a stream of pure dry nitrogen or dried under 23 vacuum. 24

The amount of alumoxane and metallocene usefully employed in preparation of the solid supported catalyst component can vary over a wide range. The concentration of the alumoxane added to the essentially dry, support can be in the range of about 0.1 to about 10 mmoles/g of support, however, greater or lesser amounts can be usefully employed. Preferably, the alumoxane concentration will be in the range of 0.5 to 10 mmoles/g of support and especially 1 to 5 mmoles/g of support. The amount of metallocene added will be such as to provide an aluminum to transition metal mole ratio of from about 1:1 to about 100:1. Preferably, the ratio is in the range from about 5:1 to about 50:1 and more preferably in the range from about 10:1 to about 20:1. These ratios are significantly less than that which is necessary for the homogeneous system.

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               The present invention employs at least one metallocene com-
     pound in the formation of the supported catalyst. Metallocene, i.e. a
 2
     cyclopentadienylide, is a metal derivative of a cyclopentadiene.
 3
     metallocenes usefully employed in accordance with this invention
 4
     contain at least one cyclopentadiene ring. The metal is selected from
 5
     Group 4b, 5b and 6b metal, preferably 4b and 5b metals, preferably
 6
     titanium, zirconium, hafnium, chromium, and vanadium, and especially
7
     titanium and zirconium. The cyclopentadienyl ring can be unsubsti-
8
     tuted or contain substituents such as, for example, a hydrocarbyl
 9
    substituent. The metallocene can contain one, two, or three cyclo-
    pentadienyl ring however two rings are preferred.
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              The preferred metallocenes can be represented by the general
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    formulas:
14
              I. (Cp)_{m}MR_{n}X_{n}
    wherein Cp is a cyclopentadienyl ring, M is a Group 4b, 5b, or 6b
15
    transition metal, R is a hydrocarbyl group or hydrocarboxy having from
    1 to 20 carbon atoms, X is a halogen, and m = 1-3, n = 0-3, q = 0-3
    and the sum of m+n+q will be equal to the oxidation state of the
19
    metal.
             III. (C_5R_k^i)_gR_s^i(C_5R_k^i)MQ_{3-g} and III. R_s^i(C_5R_k^i)_2MQ_s^i
20
21
    wherein (C_5R'_k) is a cyclopentadienyl or substituted cyclopenta-
    dienyl, each R' is the same or different and is hydrogen or a hydro-
    carbyl radical such as alkyl, alkenyl, aryl, alkylaryl, or arylalkyl
    radical containing from 1 to 20 carbon atoms or two carbon atoms are
    joined together to form a C_4-C_6 ring, R'' is a C_1-C_4 alkylene
    radical, a dialkyl germanium or silicon, or a alkyl phosphine or amine
   radical bridging two (C_5R^{\dagger}_k) rings, Q is a hydrocarbyl radical
   such as aryl, alkyl, alkenyl, alkylaryl, or aryl alkyl radical having
30 from 1-20 carbon atoms, hydrocarboxy radical having from 1-20 carbon
   atoms or halogen and can be the same or different from each other, Q'
31
   is an alkylidiene radical having from 1 to about 20 carbon atoms, s is
   0 or 1, g is 0, 1 or 2, s is 0 when g is 0, k is 4 when s is 1 and k
   is 5 when s is 0, and M is as defined above.
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             Exemplary hydrocarbyl radicals are methyl, ethyl, propyl,
   butyl, amyl, isoamyl, hexyl, isobutyl, heptyl, octyl, nonyl, decyl,
   cetyl, 2-ethylhexyl, phenyl and the like.
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Exemplary halogen atoms include chlorine, bromine, fluorine 1 and iodine and of these halogen atoms, chlorine is preferred. 2 Exemplary hydrocarboxy radicals are methoxy, ethoxy, propoxy, 3 4 butoxy, amyloxy and the like. Exemplary of the alkylidiene radicals is methylidene, ethyli-5 6 dene and propylidene. Illustrative, but non-limiting examples of the metallocenes 7 represented by formula I are dialkyl metallocenes such as bis(cyclo-8 pentadienyl)titanium dimethyl, bis(cyclopentadienyl)titanium diphenyl, bis(cyclopentadienyl)zirconium dimethyl, bis(cyclopentadienyl)-10 zirconium diphenyl, bis(cyclopentadienyl)hafnium dimethyl and 11 diphenyl, bis(cyclopentadienyl)titanium di-neopentyl, bis(cyclopenta-12 dienyl)zirconium di-neopentyl, bis(cyclopentadienyl)titanium dibenzyl, 13 bis(cyclopentadienyl)zirconium dibenzyl, bis(cyclopentadienyl)vanadium 14 dimethyl; the mono alkyl metallocenes such as bis(cyclopentadienyl)-15 titanium methyl chloride, bis(cyclopentadienyl)titanium ethyl 16 chloride, bis(cyclopentadienyl)titanium phenyl chloride, bis(cyclo-17 pentadienyl)zirconium methyl chloride, bis(cyclopentadienyl)zirconium 18 ethyl chloride, bis(cyclopentadienyl)zirconium phenyl chloride, bis-19 (cyclopentadienyl)titanium methyl bromide, bis(cyclopentadienyl)methyl 20 iodide, bis(cyclopentadienyl)titanium ethyl bromide, bis(cyclopenta-21 dienyl)titanium ethyl iodide, bis(cyclopentadienyl)titanium phenyl 22 bromide, bis(cyclopentadienyl)titanium phenyl iodide, bis(cyclopenta-23 dienyl)zirconium methyl bromide, bis(cyclopentadienyl)zirconium methyl 24 iodide, bis(cyclopentadienyl)zirconium ethyl bromide, bis(cyclopenta-25 dienyl)zirconium ethyl iodide, bis(cyclopentadienyl)zirconium phenyl 26 bromide, bis(cyclopentadienyl)zirconium phenyl iodide; the trialkyl 27 metallocenes such as cyclopentadienyltitanium trimethyl, cyclopenta-28 dienyl zirconium triphenyl, and cyclopentadienyl zirconium trineo-29 pentyl, cyclopentadienylzirconium trimethyl, cyclopentadienylhafnium 30 triphenyl, cyclopentadienylhafnium trineopentyl, and cyclopentadienyl-31 hafnium trimethyl. 32 Illustrative, but non-limiting examples of II and III metal-33 locenes which can be usefully employed in accordance with this inven-34 tion are monocyclopentadienyls titanocenes such as, pentamethylcyclo-35 pentadienyl titanium trichloride, pentaethylcyclopentadienyl titanium 36 trichloride; bis(pentamethylcyclopentadienyl) titanium diphenyl, the 37 carbene represented by the formula bis(cyclopentadienyl)titanium=CH₂ 38

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and derivatives of this reagent such as bis(cyclopentadienyl)-
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    Ti=CH<sub>2</sub>.A1(CH<sub>3</sub>)<sub>3</sub>, (Cp<sub>2</sub>TiCH<sub>2</sub>)<sub>2</sub>, Cp<sub>2</sub>TiCH<sub>2</sub>CH(CH<sub>3</sub>)CH<sub>2</sub>,
2
    Cp_Ti-CHCH_CH_; substituted bis(cyclopentadienyl)titanium (IV)
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    compounds such as: bis(indenyl)titanium diphenyl or dichloride, bis-
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    (methylcyclopentadienyl)titanium diphenyl or dihalides; dialkyl,
5
    trialkyl; tetra-alkyl and penta-alkyl cyclopentadienyl titanium
6
    compounds such as bis(1,2-dimethylcyclopentadienyl)titanium diphenyl
7
    or dichloride, bis(1,2-diethylcyclopentadienyl)titanium diphenyl or
8
    dichloride and other dihalide complexes; silicon, phosphine, amine or
9
    carbon bridged cyclopentadiene complexes, such as dimethyl silyl-
10
    dicyclopentadienyl titanium diphenyl or dichloride, methyl phosphine
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    dicyclopentadienyl titanium diphenyl or dichloride, methylenedi-
12
    cyclopentadienyl titanium diphenyl or dichloride and other dihalide
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    complexes and the like.
              Illustrative but non-limiting examples of the zirconocenes
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    Formula II and III which can be usefully employed in accordance with
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    this invention are, pentamethylcyclopentadienyl zirconium trichloride,
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    pentaethylcyclopentadienyl zirconium trichloride, bis(pentamethyl-
    cyclopentadienyl)zirconium diphenyl, the alkyl substituted cyclopenta-
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    dienes, such as bis(ethyl cyclopentadienyl)zirconium dimethyl, bis-
    (B-phenylpropylcyclopentadienyl)zirconium dimethyl, bis(methylcyclo-
21
22
    pentadienyl)zirconium dimethyl, bis(n-butyl-cyclopentadienyl)zirconium
    dimethyl, bis(cyclohexylmethylcyclopentadienyl)zirconium dimethyl,
23
24
    bis(n-octyl-cyclopentadienyl)zirconium dimethyl, and haloalkyl and
    dihalide complexes of the above; di-alkyl, trialkyl, tetra-alkyl, and --
25 °
    penta-alkyl cyclopentadienes, such as bis(pentamethylcyclopentadienyl)
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    zirconium di-methyl, bis(1,2-dimethylcyclopentadienyl)zirconium
    dimethyl and dihalide complexes of the above; silicone, phosphorus,
28
     and carbon bridged cyclopentadiene complexes such as dimethylsilyldi-
29
    cyclopentadienyl zirconium dimethyl or dihalide, and methylene
30
    dicyclopentadienyl zirconium dimethyl or dihalide, and methylene
31
     dicyclopentadienyl zirconium dimethyl or dihalide, carbenes
     represented by the formula Cp_2Zr=CHP(C_6H_5)_2CH_3, and derivatives of these
33
    compounds such as Cp2ZrCH2CH(CH3)CH2.
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              Bis(cyclopentadienyl)hafnium dichloride, bis(cyclopenta-
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     dienyl)hafnium dimethyl, bis(cyclopentadienyl)vanadium dichloride and
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     the like are illustrative of other metallocenes.
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the inorganic oxide support used in the preparation of the catalyst may be any particulate oxide or mixed oxide as previously described which has been thermally or chemically dehydrated such that it is substantially free of adsorbed moisture.

4 The specific particle size, surface area, pore volume, and 5 number of surface hydroxyl groups characteristic of the inorganic 6 oxide are not critical to its utility in the practice of the inven-7 tion. However, since such characteristics determine the amount of 8 9 inorganic oxide that it is desirable to employ in preparing the catalyst compositions, as well as affecting the properties of polymers 10 formed with the aid of the catalyst compositions, these character-11 istics must frequently be taken into consideration in choosing an 12 inorganic oxide for use in a particular aspect of the invention. For 13 example, when the catalyst composition is to be used in a gas-phase 14 polymerization process - a type of process in which it is known that 15 the polymer particle size can be varied by varying the particle size 16 of the support - the inorganic oxide used in preparing the catalyst 17 composition should be one having a particle size that is suitable for 18 the production of a polymer having the desired particle size. In 19 general, optimum results are usually obtained by the use of inorganic 20 oxides having an average particle size in the range of about 30 to 600 21_ microns, preferably about 30 to 100 microns; a surface area of about 22 50 to 1,000 square meters per gram, preferably about 100 to 400 square 23 meters per gram; and a pore volume of about 0.5 to 3.5 cc per gram; 24 preferably about 0.5 to 2cc per gram. 25

The polymerization may be conducted by a solution, slurry, or gas-phase technique, generally at a temperature in the range of about 0°-160°C or even higher, and under atmospheric, subatmospheric, or superatmospheric pressure conditions; and conventional polymerization adjuvants, such as hydrogen may be employed if desired. It is generally preferred to use the catalyst compositions at a concentration such as to provide about 0.000001 - 0.005%, most preferably about 0.00001 - 0.0003%, by weight of transition metal based on the weight of monomer(s), in the polymerization of ethylene, alone or with one or more higher olefins.

A slurry polymerization process can utilize such the surface atmospheric pressures and temperatures in the range of $40-110^\circ$. Slurry polymerization, a suspension of so 16, particle attribute.

is formed in a liquid polymerization medium to which ethylene, alphaolefin comonomer, hydrogen and catalyst are added. The liquid employed as the polymerization medium can be an alkane or cycloalkane, such as butane, pentane, hexane, or cyclohexane, or an aromatic hydrocarbon, such as toluene, ethylbenzene or xylene. The medium employe: should be liquid under the conditions of the polymerization and relatively inert. Preferably, hexane or toluene is employed.

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8 A gas-phase polymerization process utilizes superatmospheric 9 pressure and temperatures in the range of about 50°-120°C. Gas-phase 10 polymerization can be performed in a stirred or fluidized bed of 11 catalyst and product particles in a pressure vessel adapted to permit the separation of product particles from unreacted gases. Thermo-12 13 stated ethylene, comonomer, hydrogen and an inert diluent gas such as 14 nitrogen can be introduced or recirculated so as to maintain the 15 particles at a temperature of 50°-120°C. Triethylaluminum may be 16 added as needed as a scavenger of water, oxygen, and other adventi-17 tious impurities. Polymer product can be withdrawn continuously or 18 semi-continuing at a rate such as to maintain a constant product 19 inventory in the reactor. After polymerization and deactivation of 20 the catalyst, the product polymer can be recovered by any suitable means. In commercial practice, the polymer product can be recovered 21 directly from the gas phase reactor, freed of residual monomer with a 22 nitrogen purge, and used without further deactivation or catalyst 23 removal. The polymer obtained can be extruded into water and cut into 24 pellets or other suitable comminuted shapes. Pigments, antioxidants 25 and other additives, as is known in the art, may be added to the polymer.

The molecular weight of polymer product obtained in accordance with this invention can vary over a wide range, such as low as 500 up to 2,000,000 or higher and preferably 1,000 to about 500,000.

For the production of polymer product having a narrow molecular weight distribution, it is preferable to deposit only one metallocene on to the inert porous support material and employ said support metallocene together with the alumoxane as the polymerization catalyst. مصاحبها المصفومين فالمنازية

It is highly desirable to have for many applications, such as **->** 1 extrusion and molding processes, polyethylenes which have a broad 2 molecular weight distribution of the unimodal and/or the multimodal 3 type. Such polyethylenes evidence excellent processability, i.e. they 4 can be processed at a faster throughput rate with lower energy 5 requirements and at the same time such polymers would evidence reduced 6 melt flow perturbations. Such polyethylenes can be obtained by pro-7 viding a catalyst component comprising at least two different metal-8 locenes, each having different propagation and termination rate con-9 stants for ethylene polymerizations. Such rate constants are readily 10 determined by one of ordinary skill in the art. 11 12

• The molar ratio of the metallocenes, such as, for example, of a zirconocene to a titanocene in such catalysts, can vary over a wide range, and in accordance with this invention, the only limitation on the molar ratios is the breadth of the Mw distribution or the degree of bimodality desired in the product polymer. Desirably, the metallocene to metallocene molar ratio will be about 1:100 to about 100:1, and preferably 1:10 to about 10:1.

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The present invention also provides a process for producing (co)polyolefin reactor blends comprising polyethylene and copolyethylene-alpha-olefins. The reactor blends are obtained directly during a single polymerization process, i.e., the blends of this 22 . invention are obtained in a single reactor by simultaneously polymerizing ethylene and copolymerizing ethylene with an alpha-olefin thereby eliminating expensive blending operations. The process of producing reactor blends in accordance with this invention can be employed in conjunction with other prior art blending techniques, for example, the reactor blends produced in a first reactor can be subjected to further blending in a second stage by use of the series reactors.

In order to produce reactor blends the supported metallocene catalyst component comprises at least two different metallocenes each having different comonomer reactivity ratios.

The comonomer reactivity ratios of the metallocenes in general are obtained by well known methods, such as for example, as described in "Linear Method for Determining Monomer Reactivity Ratios in Copolymerization", M. Fineman and S. D. Ross, J. Polymer Science $\underline{5}$, 259 (1950) or "Copolymerization", F. R. Mayo and C. Walling, Chem.

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Rev. 46, 191 (1950) incorporated benein in its entirety by reference.
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- 2 For example, to determine reactivity ratios the most widely used
- copolymerization model is based on the following equations: 3

$$^{4} \qquad \qquad ^{M_{1}^{*} + M_{1}} \xrightarrow{k_{11} \longrightarrow M_{1}^{*}} ^{M_{1}^{*}} \qquad (1)$$

$$^{5} \qquad \qquad ^{M_{1}^{\star} + M_{2}} \xrightarrow{k_{12} \longrightarrow M_{2}^{\star}} \qquad (2)$$

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where M_1 refers to a monomer molecule which is arbitrarily designated i (where i = 1, 2) and M_i^* refers to a growing polymer chain to which monomer i has most recently attached.

The kij values are the rate constants for the indicated reactions. In this case, k₁₁ represents the rate at which an ethylene unit inserts into a growing polymer chain in which the previously inserted monomer unit was also ethylene. The reactivity rates follow

as: $r_1=k_{11}/k_{12}$ and $r_2=k_{22}/k_{21}$ 15

wherein k_{11} , k_{12} , k_{22} and k_{21} are the rate constants for 16

ethylene (1) or comonomer (2) addition to a catalyst site where the 17-18

last polymerized monomer is ethylene (k_{1X}) or comonomer (2) (k_{2X}) .

Since, in accordance with this invention, one can produce high viscosity polymer product at a relatively high temperature, temperature does not constitute a limiting parameter as with the prior art metallocene/alumoxane catalyst. The catalyst systems described herein, therefore, are suitable for the polymerization of olefins in solution, slurry or gas phase polymerizations and over a wide range of temperatures and pressures. For example, such temperatures may be in the range of about -60°C to about 280°C and especially in the range of about 0°C to about 160°C. The pressures employed in the process of

the present invention are those well known, for example, in the range

of about 1 to 500 atmospheres, however, higher pressures can be 29

30 employed.

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--≎31 The polymers produced by the process of this present invention are capable of being fabricated into a wide variety of articles, 32 as is known for homopolymers of ethylene and copolymers of ethylene 33

34 and nigher alpha-olefins.

In a slurry phase polymerization, the alkyl aluminum scav-1 enger is preferably dissolved in a suitable solvent, typically in an 2 inert hydrocarbon solvent such as toluene, xylene, and the like in a 3 molar concentration of about $5 \times 10^{-3} M$. However, greater or lesser 4 5 amounts can be used. The present invention is illustrated by the following ex-6 7 amples. 8 Examples In the Examples following the alumoxane employed was prepared 10-by adding 76.5 grams ferrous sulfate heptahydrate in 4 equally spaced 11 increments over a 2 hour period to a rapidly stirred 2 liter roundbottom flask containing 1 liter of a 13.1 wt. % solution of trimethyl-12 aluminum (TMA) in toluene. The flask was maintained at 50°C and under 13 a nitrogen atmosphere. Methane produced was continuously vented. 14 Upon completion of the addition of ferrous sulfate heptahydrate the flask was continuously stirred and maintained at a temperature of 50°C 16 for 6 hours . The reaction mixture was cooled to room temperature and 17 was allowed to settle. The clear solution containing the alumoxane 18 was separated by decantation from the insoluble solids. 19 Molecular weights were determined on a Water's Associates 20 Model No. 150C-GPC (Gel Permeation Chromatography). The measurements 21 22 were obtained by dissolving polymer samples in hot trichlorobenzene and filtered. The GPC runs are performed at 145°C in trichlorobenzene 23 at 1.0 ml/min flow using styragel columns from Perkin Elmer, Inc. 3.1% solutions (300 microliters of trichlorobenzene solution) were 26 injected and the samples were run in duplicate. The integration parameters were obtained with a Hewlett-Packard Data Module. 27 28 Catalyst Preparation 29 Catalyst A 10 grams of a high surface area (Davison 952) silica, dehy-30 drated in a flow of dry nitrogen at 800°C for 5 hours, was slurried with 50 cc of toluene at 25°C under nitrogen in a 250 cc round-bottom 33 flask using a magnetic stirrer. 25 cc of methyl alumoxane in toluene

10 grams of a high surface area (Davison 952) silica, deny31 drated in a flow of dry nitrogen at 800°C for 5 hours, was slurried
32 with 50 cc of toluene at 25°C under nitrogen in a 250 cc round-bottom
33 flask using a magnetic stirrer. 25 cc of methyl alumoxane in toluene
34 (1.03 moles/liter in aluminum) was added dropwise over 5 minutes with
35 constant stirring to the silica slurry. Stirring was continued for 30
36 minutes while maintaining the temperature at 25°C at which time the
37 toluene was decanted off and the solids recovered. To the alumoxane
38 treated silica was added dropwise over 5 minutes, with constant

stirring 25.0 cc of a toluene solution containing 0.200 gram of dicy-1 clopentadienyl zirconium dichloride. The slurry was stirred an addi-2 tional 1/2 hour while maintaining the temperature at 25°C and there-3 after the toluene was decanted and the solids recovered and dried in 4 vacuo for 4 hours. The recovered solid was neither soluble nor 5 extractable in hexane. Analysis of the catalyst indicated that it 7 contained 4.5 wt. % aluminum and 0.63 wt. % zirconium.

8 Catalyst B

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This catalyst will demonstrate that the use of the catalyst of this invention in the production of copolyethylene with 1-butene results in the more efficient incorporation of 1-butene as demonstrated by the polymer product density.

The procedure for the preparation of Catalyst A was followed 14 with the exception that the methylalumoxane treatment of the support material was eliminated. Analysis of the recovered solid indicated 16 that it contained 0.63 wt. % zirconium and 0 wt. % aluminum.

Catalyst C 17

18 The procedure for the preparation of Catalyst A was followed except that 0.300 of bis(cyclopentadienyl) zirconium dimethy was 19 20 substituted for the bis(cyclopentadienyl) zirconium dichloride. 21 Analysis of the recovered solid indicated that it contained 4.2 wt. % 22 aluminum and 1.1 wt. % zirconium.

23 Catalyst D

24 The procedure for preparation of Catalyst A was followed with 25 the exception that 0.270 g of bis(n-butyl-cyclopentadienyl) zirconium 26 dichloride was substituted for the bis(cyclopentadienyl) zirconium 27 dichloride of Catalyst A and all procedures were performed at 80°C. 28 Analysis of the recovered solids indicated that it contained 0.61 wt. % zirconium and 4.3 wt. % aluminum.

30 Catalyst E

31 The procedure for preparation of Catalyst D was followed with 32 the exception that 0.250 grams of bis(n-butyl-cyclopentadienyl)-33 zirconium dimethyl was substituted for the metallocene dichloride. 34 Analysis of the recovered solid indicated that it contained 0.63 wt % 35 zirconium and 4.2 wt % aluminum.

Catalyst F

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The procedure for the preparation of Catalyst D was followed 2 with the exception that .500 grams of bis(pentamethylcyclopenta-3 dienyl)zirconium dichloride was substituted for the metallocene. 4 Analysis of the recovered solid indicated that it contained 0.65 wt %5 6 zirconium and 4.7 wt % aluminum.

Example 1 - Polymerization - Catalyst A

Polymerization performed in the gas phase in a 1-liter auto-8 . 9 clave reactor equipped with a paddle stirrer, an external water jacket for-temperature control, a septum inlet and a regulated supply of dry nitrogen, ethylene, hydrogen and 1-butene. The reactor, containing 11 40.0 g of ground polystyrene (10 mesh) which was added to aid stirring 12 in the gas phase, was dried and degassed thoroughly at 85°C. As a 13 scavenger, 2.00 cc of a methyl alumoxane solution (0.64 molar in total 14 aluminum) was injected through the septum inlet, into the vessel using 15 a gas-tight syringe in order to remove traces of oxygen and water. 16 The reactor contents were stirred at 120 rpm at 85°C for 1 minute at 0 17 psig nitrogen pressure. 500.0 mg of Catalyst A was injected into the 18 reactor and the reactor was pressured to 200 psig with ethylene. 19 polymerization was continued for 10 minutes while maintaining the 20 reaction vessel at 85°C and 200 psig by constant ethylene flow. The 21 22 reaction was stopped by rapidly cooling and venting. 12.3 grams of polyethylene were recovered. The polyethylene was recovered by 23 stirring the product with 1 liter of dichloromethane at 40°C, filter-24 ing and washing with dichloromethane to recover the insoluble poly-25 ethylene product from the soluble polystyrene stirring aid. 26 polyethylene had a molecular weight of 146,000. 27 28

Example 2 - Polymerization - Catalyst A

Polymerization was performed as in Example 1 in the presence of Catalyst A except that 3.0 psig of hydrogen was pressured into the reactor prior to ethylene injection. 13.2 grams of polyethylene were recovered having a molecular weight of 29,000.

Example 3 - Polymerization - Catalyst A

Polymerization was performed as in Example 1 in the presence of Catalyst A except that 13.0 cc (0.137 moles) of 1-butene was pressured into the reactor together with the ethylene after the catalyst injection. 13.8 grams of polyethylene were recovered having a molecular weight of 39,000 and a density of 0.918 g/cc.

Comparative Example 3A - Polymerization - Catalyst B

The polymerization was performed as in Example 1 with the exception that Catalyst B was substituted for Catalyst A. 17.3 g of polyethylene were recovered having a molecular weight of 67,000 and a density of 0.935 g/cc. The higher density as compared with that obtained in Example 3 demonstrates the less efficient incorporation of comonomer.

Example 4 - Polymerization - Catalyst C

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Polymerization was performed as in Example 1 with the exception that Catalyst C was used in place of Catalyst A. 9.8 grams of polyethylene were recovered having a molecular weight of 189,000 and a density of 0.960 g/cc.

Example 5 - Polymerization - Catalyst C

Polymerization was performed as in Example 4 except that 13.0 cc of 1-butene (0.123 moles) and 0.6 psig of hydrogen (1.66 millimoles) was introduced after the catalyst together with the ethylene.
for grams of polyethylene were recovered having a molecular weight of 41,000 and a density of 0.926 g/cc.

19 Example 6 - Polymerization - Catalyst C

Polymerization was performed as in Example 4, except that the scavenger methyl alumoxane was eliminated and no other aluminumalkyl scavenger was injected. 10.2 grams of polyethene was recovered having a molecular weight of 120,000 and a density of 0.960 g/cc.

Example 7 - Polymerization - Catalyst D

Polymerization was performed as in Example 1 with the exception that 0.6 cc of a 25 wt. % triethylaluminum in hexane was substituted for the methylalumoxane solution of Example 1, and Catalyst D was employed in place of Catalyst A. 50.4 g of polyethylene was recovered having a molecular weight of 196,000 and a density of 0.958 g/cc.

Example 8 - Polymerization - Catalyst D

Polymerization was performed as in Example 1 with the exception that the scavenger, methylalumoxane was eliminated, Catalyst D was employed in place of Catalyst A and the polymerization was stopped at the end of 5 minutes. 28.8 g of polyethylene was recovered having a molecular weight of 196,000 and a density of 0.958 g/cc.

1	Example 9 - Polymerization - Catalyst E						
- 2	Polymerization was performed as in Example 8 using Catalyst E						
3	with no scavenger aluminum compound. 24.0 grams of polyethylene was						
4	recovered having a weight average molecular weight of 190,000, a						
5	number average molecular weight of 76,000 and a density of 0.958						
6	g/cc.						
7	Example 10 - Polymerization - Catalyst F						
8	Polymerization was performed as in Example 7 except that .500						
9	grams of Catalyst F was substituted for Catalyst D. 8.1 grams of						
10	polyethylene was recovered having a molecular weight of 137,000 and a						
11	density of 0.960 g/cc.						

CLAIMS:

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- 1. An olefin polymerization supported catalyst comprising the reaction product of at least one metallocene of a metal of Group 4b, 5b, and 6b of the Periodic Table and an alumoxane said reaction product formed in the presence of a support.
- 2. The olefin polymerization supported catalyst in accordance with claim 1 wherein the support is a porous inorganic metal oxide of a Group 2a, 3a, 4a or 4b metal.
- 3. The olefin polymerization supported catalyst in accordance with claim 2 wherein the support is silica.
- 4. The olefin polymerization supported catalyst in accordance with any of claims 1 to 3 wherein the metallocene is selected from titanium, zirconium, hafnium, and vanadium metallocenes and mixtures thereof.
- 5. The olefin polymerization supported catalyst in accordance with any of claims 1 to 4, wherein the alumoxane is methyl alumoxane.
- 6. The olefin polymerization supported catalyst in accordance with any of claims 1 to 5 wherein the aluminium to transition metal ratio in the supported product is in the range of 100:1 to 1:1 on a molar basis.
- 7. The olefin polymerization supported catalyst in accordance with claim 6 wherein the molar ratio is in the range of 50:1 to 5:1.
- 8. The olefin polymerization supported catalyst in accordance with claim 1 wherein the metallocenes are represented by the formulas

(I) $(C_p)_m M R_n X_q$ (II) $(C_5 R_k^i)_q R_s^{i'} (C_5 R_k^i)_{MQ_{3-g}}$ and (III) $R_s^{i'} (C_5 R_k^i)_{2MQ}^i$

wherein Cp is a cyclopentadienyl ring, M is a Group 4b, 5b, or 6b transition metal, R is a hydrocarbyl group or hydrocarboxy having from 1 to 20 carbon atoms, X is a halogen, m=1-3, n=0-3, q=0-3 and the sum of m + n + q is equal to the oxidation state of M, $(C_5R_k^i)$ is a cyclopentadienyl or a substituted cyclopentadienyl; each R' is the same or different and is hydrogen or a hydrocarbyl radical selected from alkyl, alkenyl aryl, alkylaryl or arylalkyl radicals containing from 1 to 20 carbon atoms, or a link between two carbon atoms joined together to form a C_4 - C_6 ring, R'' is a C_1 - C_4 alkylene radical, a dialkyl germanium or silicon or an alkyl phosphine or amine radical bridging two $(C_5R^*_k)$ rings; Q is a hydrocarbyl radical selected from aryl, alkyl, alkenyl, alkylaryl, or arylalkyl radicals having from 1-20 carbon atoms, hydrocarboxy radical having from 1-20 carbon atoms or halogen and each Q can be the same or different from each other;Q' is an alkylidiene radical having from 1 to about 20 carbon atoms;s is 0 or 1; g.is 0, 1, or 2; s is 0 when g is 0; k is 4 when s is 1 and k is 5 when s is O.

9. The olefin polymerization supported catalyst in accordance with claim 8 wherein the metallocenes are selected from bis-(cyclopentadienyl) zirconium dichloride, bis(cyclopentadienyl)-zirconium methyl chloride, bis(cyclopentadienyl) zirconium dimethyl, bis(methylcyclopentadienyl)zirconium dichloride, bis(methylcyclopentadienyl)zirconium dimethyl, bis(pentamethylcyclopentadienyl)zirconium dichloride, bis-(pentamethylcyclopentadienyl)zirconium methyl chloride, bis(pentamethylcyclopentadienyl)zirconium methyl chloride, bis(pentamethylcyclopentadienyl)zirconium dimethyl, bis(n-butyl-cyclopentadienyl)zirconium methyl chloride, bis(n-butyl-cyclopentadienyl)zirconium methyl chloride, bis(n-butyl-cyclopentadienyl)zirconium dimethyl, bis(cyclopentadienyl)titanium diphenyl, bis(cyclopentadienyl)titanium dichloride, bis(cyclopentadienyl)titanium methyl chloride, bis(cyclopentadienyl)titanium dimethyl, bis(methylcyclopentadienyl)titanium

diphenyl, bis(methylcyclopentadienyl) titanium dichloride, bis(methylcyclopentadienyl)cyclopentadienyl)- titanium diphenyl, bis(methylcyclopentadienyl)titanium methyl chloride, bis(methylcyclopentadienyl)titanium
dimethyl, bis(pentamethylcyclopentadienyl)titanium dichloride, bis(pentamethylcyclopentadienyl)titanium diphenyl, bis(pentamethylcyclopentadienyl)titanium methyl chloride, bis(pentamethylcyclopentadienyl)titanium dimethyl, bis(n-butyl-cyclopentadienyl)titanium
diphenyl, bis(n-butyl-cyclopentadienyl)titanium dichloride and mixtures thereof.

10. A method for preparing an olefin polymerization supported catalyst comprising a support and the reaction product of at least one metallocene of a metal of Group 4b, 5b and 6b of the Periodic Table and an alumoxane, comprising adding to a slurry of the support in an inert hydrocarbon solvent an alumoxane in an inert hydrocarbon solvent and a metallocene.

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11. A method for preparing polymers of ethylene or copolymers of ethylene and alpha olefins or diolefins said method comprising effecting the polymerization in the presence of the olefin polymerization catalyst of any of claims 1 to 9.





EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

EP₂ 86 .30 4806

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